

Comparability of Selected Data Items from Decennial Censuses and the American Community Survey

Part 1: Data Items Not Seriously Affected by Residents of Group Quarters		
Data Item	Effect of Excluding Group Quarters from the ACS (Years 2000 through 2005)	Other Considerations
Grandparent Caregivers	Negligible effect; grandparent caregivers typically live in households.	Census data are collected in April; ACS data reflect seasonal movements of retirees, students, and other residents because surveys are conducted throughout the year.
Household Size	No effect.	
Household or Family Income	No effect (Note, however, that individual income and per-capita income are affected).	
Household Type and Household Relationships	No effect.	
Poverty Status	Negligible effect in most communities. Census poverty statistics do not include residents of college dormitories, military barracks, or institutions (prisons, mental hospitals, nursing homes, etc.). However, residents of other group quarters such as shelters, convents, and group homes are included in census poverty statistics but excluded from the ACS.	Census poverty rates are based on income in 1999 and household structure in April 2000. ACS poverty rates are based on household structure at the time the form is completed and income in the prior 12 months. Quality of ACS income data may be adversely affected by the fact that the 12 month period does not correspond to a tax year for most respondents.

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Part 2: Data Items that Are Significantly Affected by Residents of Group Quarters		
Data Item	Effect of Excluding Group Quarters from the ACS (Years 2000 through 2005)	Other Considerations
<i>All Data Items</i>		<i>Census data are collected in April; ACS data reflect seasonal movements of retirees, students, and other residents because surveys are conducted throughout the year.</i>
Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin	The effect of group quarters can be substantial in communities with dormitories, prisons, juvenile facilities, nursing homes, or other large group quarters that draw residents from particular demographic segments of the population.	The Census Bureau's annual population estimates are the preferred source of data regarding total population and population distribution by age, race, sex, and Hispanic origin.
Ancestry	Individuals in group quarters are included in census ancestry tables but not in ACS tables.	
Armed Forces Status	Military barracks have a particularly significant effect in those states with large military bases.	
Citizenship	College dormitories have a particularly significant effect.	
Commuting (means of transportation, travel time, etc.)	The universe of census commuting tables is typically restricted to workers. Although many group quarter residents do not have jobs, any employed individuals in college dormitories, worker dormitories, military barracks, correctional facilities, and other group quarters are included in Census tables but omitted from the ACS.	Commuting times vary from month to month due to weather conditions and other factors. Most census forms are filled out in March, but the ACS is conducted throughout the year.

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Part 2: Data Items that Are Significantly Affected by Residents of Group Quarters (continued)		
Data Item	Effect of Excluding Group Quarters from the ACS (Years 2000 through 2005)	Other Considerations
Disability Status	Nursing homes have a particularly significant effect.	The disability questions in the ACS are different from the disability questions in the 2000 Census.
Educational Attainment	College dormitories have a particularly significant effect.	
Employment Status	Census tables typically reflect the employment status of persons in group quarters. Any tables restricted to the "non-institutionalized population" exclude such group quarters as prisons, mental hospitals, and nursing homes. However, residents of such group quarters as dormitories, shelters, and barracks are part of the non-institutionalized population.	Due to processing errors in the 2000 Census, unemployment was seriously overstated in many communities with group quarters. See pages 961-962 of: http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/doc/sf3.pdf
Fertility	Residents of most group quarters have lower fertility than other individuals in the same age groups.	Fertility was not measured by the 2000 Census.
Food Stamps	ACS tables exclude any food stamp recipients in shelters and other group quarters.	Food stamp participation has not been measured by decennial censuses.
Income (Individual or Per-Capita Income)	Census tables include the group quarter population. Per-capita income figures reflect the income of group quarter residents in the numerator and the number of group quarter residents in the denominator.	Quality of ACS income data may be adversely affected by the fact that the 12 month period does not correspond to a tax year for most respondents.
Language	College dormitories have a particularly significant effect.	

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Data Item	Effect of Excluding Group Quarters from the ACS (Years 2000 through 2005)	Other Considerations
Marital Status	Most group quarters include a disproportionate number of people who are not currently married. Nursing homes also include a disproportionate number of people who are widowed.	
Migration (residence 1 or 5 years ago)	Many residents of group quarters, such as prisons, dormitories, or nursing homes, have recently moved there from elsewhere.	Decennial censuses have measured migration over a 5-year time frame, but the ACS measures migration over a 1-year time frame.
Occupation, Industry, and Class of Worker	Census figures include group quarter residents to the extent that they are in the labor force. Colleges have a substantial impact, nursing homes typically have a minimal impact, and correctional institutions have an impact to the extent that residents are reported as members of the labor force.	
Place of Birth and Year of Entry to U.S.	College dormitories have a particularly significant effect.	
School Enrollment	College dormitories have a particularly significant effect.	To minimize the effect of summer vacations on school enrollment data, ACS respondents are classified as students if they attended school at any time in the prior three months.

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Data Item	Effect of Excluding Group Quarters from the ACS (Years 2000 through 2005)	Other Considerations
Total Population	Significant affect at state level, and for counties and communities with significant population in group quarters.	The Census Bureau's annual population estimates are the preferred source of data regarding total population and population distribution by age, race, sex, and Hispanic origin.
Veteran Status	Veterans in group quarters are included by the census but excluded by the ACS.	